

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy on the use of the Federal Career Intern Program as provided in 5 CFR Parts 213 and 315.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT/MAJOR CHANGES:** This revision establishes the framework for implementing the Federal Career Intern Program in VA. It also delegates the authority to subordinate organizational levels to establish national and local intern programs. The appendix provides guidance on the implementation of the interim Office of Personnel Management regulations effective December 14, 2000. The pages in this revision are to be inserted at the corresponding page numbers in part II, chapter 2, section C, of VA Handbook 5005, dated April 15, 2002. Appendix II-N has been added. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management Web site](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Human Resources Management Programs and Policies Service (051), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, "Staffing."
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/John A. Gauss
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/Jacob Lozada, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary for Human
Resources and Administration

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PART II. APPOINTMENTS

CONTENTS

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
<u>CHAPTER 1.</u> GENERAL APPOINTMENT PROVISIONS	
<u>SECTION A.</u> GENERAL	
1. <u>SCOPE</u>	II-1
2. <u>EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION</u>	II-1
<u>SECTION B.</u> APPOINTMENT REQUIREMENTS AND DETERMINATIONS	
1. <u>VA DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE PROGRAM</u>	II-3
2. <u>HHS EXCLUSIONARY LIST</u>	II-3
3. <u>SUITABILITY</u>	II-4
<u>SECTION C.</u> EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES	
1. <u>GENERAL</u>	II-5
2. <u>POLICY</u>	II-5
3. <u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u>	II-6
4. <u>TOURS OF DUTY</u>	II-6
5. <u>HOME LEAVE</u>	II-7
6. <u>TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES FOR PURPOSE OF TAKING HOME LEAVE AND VACATION (ANNUAL) LEAVE</u>	II-8
7. <u>REQUIREMENTS AND SELECTION FACTORS</u>	II-9
8. <u>ORIENTATION</u>	II-9
9. <u>U.S. CITIZENS RECRUITED IN MANILA</u>	II-10
10. <u>ADMINISTRATIVE REASSIGNMENT RIGHTS</u>	II-10
11. <u>APPLICATION FOR RETURN TO THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES</u>	II-12
<u>CHAPTER 2.</u> TITLE 5 APPOINTMENTS	
<u>SECTION A.</u> GENERAL	
1. <u>SCOPE</u>	II-13
2. <u>EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT</u>	II-13
3. <u>FILLING POSITIONS</u>	II-14
4. <u>TYPES OF APPOINTMENT</u>	II-15
5. <u>EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS AND DETERMINATIONS</u>	II-16
6. <u>CONTROL OF VA EMPLOYEE-VETERAN RECORDS</u>	II-21

CONTENTS-CONTINUED

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
-----------	------

SECTION A. GENERAL-Continued

7. <u>PART-TIME AND INTERMITTENT EMPLOYMENT</u>	II-21
8. <u>FILLING A POSITION OCCUPIED BY AN EMPLOYEE ON LEAVE</u>	II-21
9. <u>PROBATIONARY PERIOD/TRIAL PERIOD</u>	II-21
10. <u>PLACEMENT FOLLOW-UP</u>	II-22
11. <u>ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS</u>	II-22
12. <u>USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES</u>	II-22

SECTION B. EMPLOYMENT IN THE COMPETITIVE SERVICE

1. <u>GENERAL</u>	II-23
2. <u>CAREER-CONDITIONAL AND CAREER EMPLOYMENT</u>	II-23
3. <u>NON-PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT</u>	II-25
4. <u>SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL (ST) POSITION APPOINTMENTS</u>	II-27

SECTION C. EMPLOYMENT IN THE EXCEPTED SERVICE

1. <u>VETERANS READJUSTMENT APPOINTMENT (VRA)</u>	II-29
2. <u>APPOINTMENT OF EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS</u>	II-29
3. <u>SPECIAL NEEDS APPOINTMENTS [5 CFR 213.3102(i)(2)]</u>	II-32
4. <u>PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT INTERN</u>	II-32
5. <u>STUDENT EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT</u>	II-32
6. <u>OTHER EXCEPTED SERVICE APPOINTMENTS</u>	II-36
7. <u>CAREER INTERN PROGRAM</u>	[II-43]

SECTION D. QUALIFICATION STANDARDS

1. <u>SCOPE</u>	II-43
2. <u>POLICY</u>	II-43
3. <u>GENERAL GUIDELINES</u>	II-44
4. <u>VA QUALIFICATION STANDARDS</u>	II-46
5. <u>ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR VHA POSITIONS</u>	II-46
6. <u>OPM QUALIFICATION STANDARDS</u>	II-47
7. <u>DEVELOPING QUALIFICATION STANDARDS</u>	II-47
8. <u>MODIFICATION OF VA QUALIFICATION STANDARDS--GENERAL</u>	II-48
9. <u>MODIFICATION OF VA QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS</u>	II-48
10. <u>MODIFICATION OF VA QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT</u>	II-49

CONTENTS-CONTINUED

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
APPENDICES-Continued	
II-G14. <u>OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD</u>	II-G14-1
II-G15. <u>LICENSED PHARMACIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD</u>	II-G15-1
II-H. <u>APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES BY OCCUPATION/ASSIGNMENT</u>	
II-H1. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PHYSICIANS TO SERVICE CHIEF AND COMPARABLE POSITIONS</u>	II-H1-1
II-H2. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING DENTISTS AND EFDAS</u>	II-H2-1
II-H3. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PODIATRISTS</u>	II-H3-1
II-H4. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING OPTOMETRISTS</u>	II-H4-1
II-H5. <u>RECRUITMENT, APPOINTMENT, ADVANCEMENT, CHANGE IN ASSIGNMENT AND REASSIGNMENT OF REGISTERED NURSES (RNs) IN GRADES IV AND V</u>	II-H5-1
II-H6. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING NURSE ANESTHETISTS TO SECTION CHIEF POSITIONS</u>	II-H6-1
II-H7. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AT CHIEF GRADE</u>	II-H7-1
II-H8. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING CHIEFS OF PHARMACY SERVICE (ALL GRADES), CLINICAL PHARMACY/PHARMACY SPECIALISTS, AND PROGRAM SPECIALISTS AT GRADES GS-13 AND ABOVE</u>	II-H8-1
II-H9. <u>PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AS SECTION CHIEF</u>	II-H9-1
II-I. <u>ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY</u>	II-I-1
II-J. <u>REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL TO PETITION THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DOS) FOR SUPPORT OF A WAIVER OF THE 2-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT OF THE UNITED STATES EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM BY THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE (INS)</u>	II-J-1
II-K. <u>RCVL (RESIDENT/TRAINEE CREDENTIALS VERIFICATION LETTER)</u>	II-K-1
II-L. <u>CREDENTIALING CHECKLIST</u>	II-L-1
II-M. <u>SAMPLE CONSULTANT CERTIFICATE</u>	II-M-1
[II-N. <u>CAREER INTERN PROGRAM</u>	II-N-1]

*Use in conjunction with the OPM Standard.

[7. CAREER INTERN PROGRAM

a. **Purpose.** This paragraph establishes VA policy for implementing the Federal Career Intern Program within VA. This program is designed to help recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations. The purpose of the program is to attract exceptional men and women to the workforce who have diverse professional experiences, academic credentials, training, and competencies, and to prepare them for careers in analyzing and implementing public programs.

b. **Policy**

(1) For purposes of this program, the Administrations and staff offices are considered to be separate entities.

(2) Authority is delegated to field facilities to develop Career Intern Programs to meet their recruitment needs in specific occupations. This authority does not preclude establishing intern programs at the Administration or national levels.

(3) Any programs established under the auspices of this paragraph must comply with the criteria as outlined in 5 CFR 213.3202(o).

(4) Guidance for establishing programs under this authority may be found in Appendix N of this part.

c. **Responsibilities**

(1) The Office of Human Resources Management shall advise management and operating officials on the policies and procedures and monitor the use of this program.

(2) Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials shall provide a copy of Administration-wide and/or national Career Intern Programs to the Office of Human Resources Management Program and Policies Service (051) prior to implementation. Any programs implemented under this authority must comply with the provisions of this part and Appendix II-N.

(3) Human resources management officers at local facilities shall ensure any Career Intern Program(s) implemented under this authority complies with the provisions of this part and Appendix II-N.

d. **References and Authorities**

(1) Executive Order 13162, dated July 6, 2000

(2) 5 CFR, parts 213, 302, 315 and 351]

[APPENDIX N. CAREER INTERN PROGRAM]

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of the Career Intern Program is to attract exceptional men and women to the VA workforce who have diverse professional experiences, academic credentials, training, and competencies, and to prepare them for careers in analyzing and implementing public programs. The program is intended to be used for grade GS-5, 7, and 9 (and equivalent) positions or other trainee positions appropriate for the program. The policy and delegated authority for this program may be found in chapter 2, paragraph 7, of this part.

a. Administrations and staff offices must submit a justification through the Office of Human Resources Management Programs and Policies Service (051) to request Office Personnel Management (OPM) approval to cover additional grades to meet unique or specialized needs.

b. Those GS-5 and 7 positions subject to the *Luevano Consent Decree* will be required to use those assessment tools permitted under the Decree. The *Luevano* Consent Decree specifies that the alternate examining procedures be used when filling any position covered by the Decree. The language of the Consent Decree does not make a distinction between the competitive or excepted services when filling those positions it covers. For this reason, *Luevano*-approved rating schedules and assessments must be used. A listing of the specific occupations covered by the Consent Decree may be found on the OPM Web site. Note that for a *Luevano*-covered position, the noncompetitive Outstanding Scholar Program appointing authority can only be used as a supplement to competitive examining. Thus, unless competitive examining is being used as well, when the excepted Career Intern Program is being used to fill specific *Luevano*-covered Intern positions, the Outstanding Scholar appointing authority is not an available option for those Intern positions.

2. ESTABLISHING A NEED FOR A CAREER INTERN PROGRAM

a. Career Intern Programs are designed to meet workforce planning needs for careers in the public service or to address anticipated shortages in a specific occupation.

b. Any occupation for which a Career Intern Program is being established must lend itself to a formal training and development component. To establish a specific program, the human resources specialist(s), in collaboration with the selecting official/subject matter expert(s), will:

(1) Identify appropriate targeted recruitment sources of candidates with the appropriate background, skills, or education; and

(2) Develop a career intern formal training and development plan. As a first step, it should be determined if a Departmental or Administration level intern program already exists for this career. If no program exists, the local facility may develop one. Components of a program should include but are not limited to individual development plans, performance standards, position descriptions, rotational assignments, specific skills to be acquired, etc.

3. QUALIFICATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS. Candidates will be evaluated using official VA or OPM qualification standards, as appropriate.

PART II**APPENDIX N**

a. Veterans' preference applies to the selection of career interns. Since career interns are appointed to positions in the excepted service, the procedures described in 5 CFR 302 must be followed.

b. Interns will be appointed under 5 CFR 213.3202(o) in the excepted service (Schedule B) for a period not to exceed 2 years, unless developed for or extended up to a maximum of 1 additional year with official VA or OPM approval, as appropriate. (See paragraph 4 for approval process.)

c. Upon successful completion of the internships, the Interns may be eligible for noncompetitive conversion to career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) appointments in accordance with 5 CFR 315.712.

d. Throughout the internship, the intern must participate in a formal training program and job assignments to develop competencies appropriate to VA's mission and needs.

4. EXTENSIONS OF THE INTERN TRAINING PERIOD

a. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) may approve short-term extensions of up to an additional 120 days for internships that may exceed the 2-year limitation, to cover rare or unusual circumstances. Requests for an extension of up to 120 days should be submitted to OHRM (051) with the following information:

(1) The employee's original training and/or developmental plan.

(2) The extenuating or unusual circumstance that warrants the request. An example of an extenuating circumstance is when the employee is unable to complete the plan in the time allotted, due to personal issues dealing with family death or medical obligations which would hinder completion of the internship.

(3) The length of the requested extension.

b. OPM approval is required to develop or extend internships for up to 1 additional year beyond the authorized 2 years for additional training and/or developmental activities. Administrations and staff offices must submit a request to OHRM (051) no later than 90 days prior to the end of the 2-year period. The information should include:

(1) The internship training and/or developmental plan.

(2) Reason why the 2-year period is not sufficient time for completion of the internship.

(3) The additional amount of time needed to complete the internship.

5. TENURE GROUP. Career interns are in tenure group II of the excepted service for purposes of 5 CFR 351.502.

6. PROMOTIONS

a. During the internship period, career interns may receive promotions according to the training plan upon completion of training requirements and meeting qualification requirements and time-in-grade restrictions, as outlined in VA's merit promotion policy.

b. This provision does not confer entitlement to promotion.

7. CONVERSION TO COMPETITIVE SERVICE

a. General

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (3) of this section, service as an intern shall confer no rights to further Federal employment in either the competitive or excepted service upon the expiration of the internship period.

(2) Career interns may be converted to the competitive civil service upon successful completion of internship requirements and all qualification, citizenship, suitability, and performance requirements. These noncompetitive conversions will be effective on the date the 2-year service requirement is met (or at the end of any pre-approved extended period). This non-competitive conversion to career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) appointment is made under the provisions of 5 CFR 315.712.

(3) An employee who held a career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) appointment in VA immediately prior to entering the Career Intern Program in VA, and who fails to complete the Career Intern Program for reasons unrelated to misconduct or suitability, shall be placed in a career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) position at no lower grade or pay than the position the employee left to accept the position in the Career Intern Program.

(4) Service under the Career Intern Program is creditable toward career tenure in the competitive service, if the career intern is converted to a career-conditional appointment under 5 CFR 315.712.

b. Conversion Based on Service as a Career Intern

(1) **Non-Competitive Conversion.** An intern may be converted non-competitively to career-conditional employment (or, if appropriate, career), when the following criteria are met:

(a) Successful completion of a Career Intern Program under 5 CFR 213.3202(o) at the time of conversion; and

(b) Satisfaction of all citizenship, suitability, and qualification requirements.

(2) **Tenure on Conversion.** An employee whose appointment is converted to career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) employment under paragraph (1) of this section becomes:

(a) A career-conditional employee except as provided in paragraph (2)(b) below.

**PART II
APPENDIX N**

(b) A career employee when he or she has previously completed the service requirement for career tenure or is excepted from it by 5 CFR 315.201(c).

(3) **Acquisition of Competitive Status.** An employee whose employment is converted to career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) employment under this section acquires a competitive status automatically upon conversion.

(4) **Probationary Period.** Career interns will not be required to serve a probationary period following their conversion to the competitive service. The 2 years the employee spends on the excepted appointment will serve as the employee's probationary (trial) period.

8. EXPIRATION OF CAREER INTERN APPOINTMENT

a. The appointment of a career intern expires at the end of the 2-year internship period, including any extensions.

b. One of two results must occur:

(1) The intern is converted to a career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) appointment in accordance with 5 CFR 315.712 without a break in service.

(2) If an intern is not converted to a career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) appointment, the career intern appointment terminates, unless specifically eligible for placement under 8c below.

c. If a VA organizational entity has selected a VA career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) employee for the Intern Program, and he/she fails to complete the program for reasons unrelated to misconduct or suitability, the organization shall place the intern in a position of equivalent status, tenure, and pay as the position the intern held prior to the internship.

d. If a VA organizational entity selects a candidate who does not have prior career-conditional (or, if appropriate, career) status, the candidate will be informed in writing at the time of Career Intern Program appointment of the possible reasons for termination from the program (e.g., failure to complete program due to performance, conduct, suitability, lack of satisfactory progress in training, or lack of demonstration of needed skills).

9. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

a. The sponsoring VA entity will provide the career intern with formal training and developmental opportunities to acquire the appropriate VA-identified competencies needed for conversion. These activities may include, but are not limited to, formal training classes, rotational or other job assignments, attendance at conferences and seminars, interagency assignments, or other activities approved by VA.

b. The intern's developmental program should be consistent with the career field map when one has been developed nationally for that position. This map may be a visual representation of the competencies, training, and developmental experiences an employee can use to progress through the technical and leadership paths within their career field.]